

ON
TRACK
OFF
ROAD





JOE MILLER
CREATIVE.COM





THE NEW VX-3
NITROUS
AVAILABLE NOW



In the spotlight...

Ken Roczen made a small slice of history by winning A1 last weekend. First German at nineteen years of age and first opening night success for KTM who ended up blitzing both classes in LA. Still such a long way to go for '94' but this was an amazing start to life on the 450...

Photo by Ray Archer/www.blog.ktm.com



AMA-MX







PLAY

Parity elsewhere...

Competition is not only rife in North America but also in the southern side of the hemisphere. At the time of writing reigning champ Cyril Despres had just suffered a crash on the Yamaha that dropped him to eighth overall but after the first stage of the 2014 Dakar Honda, KTM, Yamaha and Sherco filled the first four positions. Big credit to Brit Sam Sunderland for Stage 2 victory, his very first and on that sumptuous works CRF450 Rally

Photo by teamhrc.com







Hola and Ole!

This shot in 2011 of Clement Desalle was taken at the last Spanish Grand Prix before the country disappeared from the 2012 and 2013 FIM Motocross World Championship calendars. Some joy then with the news this week that popular Madrid-based circuit Talavera de la Reina will be welcoming back GP action for the first time since 2000 on May 11th

Photo by Ray Archer





Photo: Jeff Kardas



@ride100percent
www.ride100percent.com



Zach

— TEAM GEICO HONDA —



The Racecraft - Max -





AMA-SX

LOS ANGELES

ANAHEIM · JANUARY 4th · Rnd 1 of 17

450SX winner: Ken Roczen, KTM

250SX West Coast winner: Jason Anderson, KTM



ANAHEIM K-ROCKED

By Steve Matthes www.pulpmx.com, photos by Simon Cudby @cudby



PLAY

You just never know what you're gonna get with the start of a new supercross year. Like that guy who sat on that bench said 'supercross is like a box of chocolates'...or something like that anyways. With the completion of round one at Anaheim there's one race down and sixteen to go. Let's take a look at some random thoughts from the assorted box of chocolates we saw this past Saturday night...

-Well it's not a surprise that Red Bull KTM's Kenny Roczen won a race this year (although I had predicted that he wouldn't do so in 2014...pretty genius of me I must say) but it is a surprise how early he has managed it. What a ride by the German at Anaheim and congrats to him. Yes, he was getting caught by Chad Reed, James Stewart and Ryan Dungey at different points but he did enough to bring it home. Kenny's now raced four 450SX events and gone 7-8-2-1 with the first three results all coming on the 350SX-F. Roczen couldn't have asked for a better start to his rookie season and are we in for a Jeremy McGrath-type of rookie big bike 450 year?

-So to once again reiterate what a different time we're living in. A KTM once again won a 450SX and the rider that won is from Germany. What in thearnation happened to a guy from Southern California riding a Honda winning supercrosses? Just goes to show you that this supercross stuff can be anyone's game nowadays.

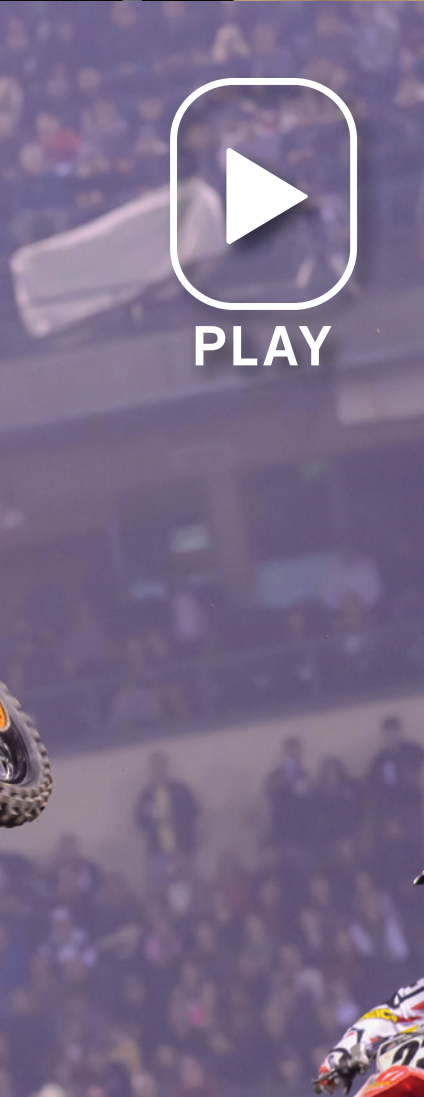
-When the three-time champion, Monster Energy Kawasaki's Ryan Villopoto, grabbed the holeshot and led the first lap of the Main most of us assumed this thing would be over. After all he is simply the best racer we have here in America and that fact has been proven. But then Villopoto made a mistake in the sand and lost the front end. He quickly dropped back to fifth and there he would stay until Yoshimura Suzuki's James Stewart crashed out and RV took a fourth on the night. It was a bit weird and I wondered if he was hurt or if the bike tweaked from the fall. There wasn't the usual aggression and attempt by Villopoto to blitz his way back to the front. Checking-in with Villopoto after the race he mentioned that there wasn't an easy way to make up time and the track was slick.



Roczen's trip through A1 started with the track walk alongside mechanic Kelly Lumgair and went through an evening of consistent speed and performance to a memorable culmination



NAHEIM 1



ANAHEIM 1



Jason Anderson sets out his stall with a second career victory and first on the KTM 250SX-F



PLAY

Indeed he was right, checking the lap times afterwards gives us an amazing NINE guys in the same second as the winner. That's parity, and that's smart thinking by Villopoto. Pushing it might have led to more mistakes and last year he left A1 with a sixteenth so his fourth this year was looking pretty good in comparison. Still, he was leading and in control when he made the mistake to lose the race that's not going to sit well with him going into Phoenix.

-Pre-event I believed that 2014 is going to be the year of Rockstar KTM's Jason Anderson in the 250SX class but he was definitely more impressive than I thought he would be. Winning his heat and then tracking down leader Cole Seely of the Troy Lee Designs team (after being passed by Seely early in the main) was a sure sign that Anderson hasn't let the switch to KTM (after a few years on Suzuki) set him back. And the gap that Anderson and Seely had on third and fourth place (GEICO's Zach Osborne and Pro Circuit's Dean Wilson) was also resolute. Anderson had a bit of help from a lapper to reel-in Seely but he still rode a strong race. Jason has taken a strange career path from being a Loretta Lynn Amateur MX rising star to being sent home in his rookie year for poor performances and fitness. Credit to him for working hard to become a solid pro and now looking like a title contender.

-Poor Dean Wilson. The Pro Circuit rider is the winningest all-time 250SX (125) rider that does not have a title in the small bore SX class. He's had some titanic title battles with Justin Barcia and Eli Tomac among others but has come up short with crashes and injuries. He's ridiculously fast and talented but hasn't been able to put it together quite yet. And this year he was the heavy favourite to win the 250SX West class, but, once again, the anvil fell on him in the form of a New Year's Day crash where he hurt his elbow. It was so bad that he mostly cruised the first practice and with the AMA's permission he was prepared to pull out of the west coast series altogether if the pain was too much and Pro Circuit were prepped to put Martin Davalos in. So his fourth in the Main wasn't too bad but gee whiz, Dean Wilson can't catch a break these days.



James Stewart's otherwise excellent opening round went sideways, literally, when the former champ caught a rut in the whoops challenging for the lead (above) and it was all over...



ANAHEIM 1





PLAY



Ryan Dungey (left) knows the price of a point so his steady ride to second position was a decent start to 2014. Dean Wilson's Pro Circuit KX250F still ranks as one of the more desirable motorcycles in the paddock

AMA BLOG

THE COX VIEW...

By Steve Cox



Even though Anaheim 1 is the most hyped event of the year Stateside, it rarely disappoints. All of the preparation the teams and racers have put in between September and the New Year builds to a crescendo in early January and crazy stuff tends to happen at round one. Ultimately, this means that A1 is often not a great indicator of how the entire series will go.

In 2013, for example, defending champ Ryan Villopoto had a terrible race even though he had won the event to start both of his previous championship seasons in 2011 and 2012. He still pulled off the championship in 2013 several rounds before the end of the campaign.

This year, Villopoto came to Press Day and downplayed his scratchy voice, but the reality is that he was a little bit under the weather. And James Stewart came in fit and trim with an aura of confidence that we haven't seen in him since probably 2009.

All of this being said, Anaheim 1 went down as predicted; by being unpredictable. Justin Barcia was the quickest guy, judging by the clock. He set the fastest time in qualifying (57.656 seconds), and in the second 450 Heat of the night, he passed Stewart and put down a 57.755 on his way to the win. When it really counted, in the main event, though, he started 15th on his way to 5th place. It was a great ride, all things considered, but it wasn't what he was hoping for.

Villopoto grabbed the early lead from Ken Roczen, but he could never quite shake the rookie, and on lap nine, he lost the front end and went down on the exit of the turn that led to the sand section, handing the lead back to Roczen. Roczen had spent the first part of the race trying to stay close to Villopoto while also trying to keep Chad Reed behind him. When Ryan Dungey caught Reed on lap seven, Reed soon lost touch with Roczen.

Reed's defensive riding caused he and Dungey to fall into Stewart's grasp at the halfway point. Stewart started outside the top 10 and was on a tear. On laps 12 and 13, Stewart used the same turn leading into the sand section to get by both Dungey (lap 12) and Reed (lap 13). Then he set out after Roczen.

Over the next three laps, Stewart threw down a 58.840, 58.550, and then a 58.101 marking the fastest lap of the entire race. In those three laps, he cut Roczen's four-second lead to almost nothing, and then on lap 16, Stewart tried the same move on Roczen but his rival carried enough corner speed that Stewart couldn't make it work. Two straightaways later, Stewart got alongside Roczen in the whoops but caught a whoop awkwardly with his rear wheel and swapped out hard. Stewart picked up his bike, saw that the handlebar was pretzeled, and withdrew from the race. The two favorites crashed themselves out of what looked to be certain victories, and the rookie, Roczen, proved to be the most collected of the bunch on his way to the first win of his 450 career, leading Dungey, Reed and Villopoto (and their combined six AMA 450 Supercross Championships) to the checkered.

But what about round two? Expect something different in the 450 class. Roczen's performance was amazing, but most of all it was complete. Roczen used his head and put in a rounded race, with a great start and consistent laps. But Roczen wasn't the fastest guy out there. Ultimately, most of the time, the fastest guy wins...

As for the 250cc class, though, title favorite Dean Wilson crashed the Wednesday before Anaheim 1 and hurt his elbow, and at Anaheim 1, Rockstar Energy KTM's Jason Anderson and TLD/Lucas Oil Honda's Cole Seely were clearly heads and tails faster than the rest of the field. If they continue to get starts, don't expect anyone (outside of Wilson, if he heals up) to challenge them for the title.

ANAHEIM 1



RC and Windham still put on a show...



A back-to-front race for Justin Barcia who is bound to be more of a protagonist this weekend in Phoenix



"So, about that mantle that you've handed over to me..."









AMA-SX CLASSIFICATION & CHAMPIONSHIP

AMA 450SX RESULT

Riders

1	Ken Roczen, GER	KTM
2	Ryan Dungey, USA	KTM
3	Chad Reed, AUS	Kawasaki
4	Ryan Villopoto, USA	Kawasaki
5	Justin Barcia, USA	Honda

AMA 250SX WEST RESULT

Riders

1	Jason Anderson, USA	KTM
2	Cole Seely, GER	Honda
3	Zach Osborne, USA	Honda
4	Dean Wilson, GBR	Kawasaki
5	Cooper Webb, USA	Yamaha

AMA 450SX STANDINGS (AFTER 1 OF 17 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Ken Roczen	25
2 Ryan Dungey	22
3 Chad Reed	20
4 Ryan Villopoto	18
5 Justin Barcia	16

AMA 250SX WEST STANDINGS (AFTER 1 OF 9 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Jason Anderson	25
2 Cole Seely	22
3 Zach Osborne	20
4 Dean Wilson	18
5 Cooper Webb	16

THE ART OF DISILLUSION...

By Steve Matthes

A racer's life is funny. You really do live in a bit of a fairy-tale land at times because the amount of effort put in to being one of the very best riders is extreme. And for most racers, the work level doesn't always produce the same amount of reward. There are very few winners each year and yet the guys in 8th, 9th and 10th are gunning just as hard as those on the top of the podium.

The old adage of Ricky Carmichael winning because he worked the hardest is bunk. Ricky won because he had a shitload of talent on a motorcycle AND he worked his bollocks off. It's that simple, some riders are just more talented than others. But as a racer, it's tough to look in the mirror and realize that although you're good, the bottom line is that you just may not be good enough.

And hey, that's life. I'm not the best writer or journalist around either but I'm trying to be. And when I was a mechanic I wasn't the best tuner but I always tried hard and wanted to be the best. In the end, life is cruel. Want an example of that? I went through my post-race interviews from Anaheim 1 and took what the riders told me and then translated that to give you what they really meant.

Andrew Short- BTOSports KTM

What he said: "I've been running it (the WP air shock) for quite a while, since right after Elsinore. I haven't really ridden a standard one in a long time. It seems like that's where all the development's going at KTM and I really like it and prefer it."

What he meant: "KTM basically told me that I have to run it because they want to use me as a test mule for Ryan Dungey and Ken Roczen."

What he said: "I have nothing but respect for him (Ivan Tedesco). I've raced him since I was a little kid. We're both competitive. We both try really hard. I think we're similar in a lot of ways, obviously that breeds competition. The last thing I want to do is take out a great guy like him. We both need to keep racing and going forward."

What he meant: "Yeah I hit him and put a hole in his case, oh well, that's racing."

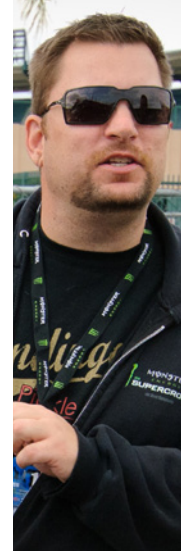
Jason Anderson- Rockstar KTM

What he said: "I was trying to be cool about it. He (Cole Seely) would have done the same thing, that's what he said. It's a win and you're going to do whatever it takes to win."

What he meant: "Yeah my pass for the win on the second last corner was sketchy as hell but I would've done that to my mom if she was there. It's the win bro!"

What he said: "I thought the track was technical but it was on the easy side because everyone did the same thing. Once the Main came around everyone was hitting the same marks, so it was kind of tough to make up time or pull away from somebody."

What he meant- "The track sucked."



Chad Reed- Team Two-Two Kawasaki

What he said: "I think they're (Kawasaki) helping us more than maybe what people think. For me, my biggest thing is there's no over-promising. I feel like they've lived up to their end of the bargain. And for me and us as a race team we just want to build that."

What he meant: "I've ridden just about every brand out there and Kawasaki's my last chance. I love them so, so, so much."

"As a racer, it's tough to look in the mirror and realize that you may not be good enough."

Ryan Villopoto- Monster Energy Kawasaki

What he said: "After I fell, I got up and tightened up a little bit. Those front guys were just inching away from me. Actually once I saw Stew start to catch on those other guys I was like, 'well, this is going to be interesting'. And then a couple laps later it got interesting."

What he meant: "I got arm pump for a bit and when I saw Stewart go by I knew he was going way too fast for the track and he would crash. And he did."

What he said: "I stalled my bike and then caught back up. What can I say? When you get some-

body (Mike Alessi) that kind of has that mentality and that riding style you're going to always get that out of him. That's his MO."

What he meant: "Mike Alessi is nuts and you don't know what he's capable of. I know this because I've raced the guy my whole life."

What he said: "I saw that (Alessi crying after beating Ryan in the heat). It was very interesting on TV there. I'm sure it made some people uncomfortable."

What he meant: "That shit was super weird bro."

Jake Weimer- Monster Energy Kawasaki

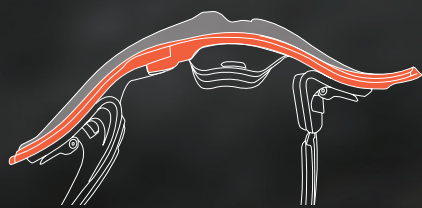
What he said: "I wouldn't have been mad at him (Eli Tomac who crashed into Weimer) at all had he not jumped up and threw every cuss word in the book at me. Had he not have done that I never would have said a word and I would have said, you know what, it's racing and that's how it goes sometimes. But him jumping up and throwing every cuss word at me that he could think of, that fired me up."

What he meant: "...Actually he meant exactly that. Sometimes the truth does get out!



FIVE . FIVE

NECK BRACE



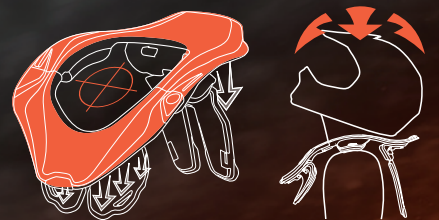
LOWER PROFILE

■ 5.5 ■ OLD LEATT PROFILE



EASY ADJUSTMENT

5-WAY, FOR BEST PERSONAL FIT



360° STRIKEPLATFORM

ALL ROUND SAFETY



PLAY

CE CERTIFIED AS PERSONAL
PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT
www.leatt.com



JEFFREY HERLINGS



LEATT[®]
Engineered for Performance
© Leatt Corporation 2013



THE PUZZLE MAKER

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer



Red Bull KTM are undefeated in the FIM Motocross World Championship for the last four years in both the premier MXGP category and also MX2, with three different riders nonetheless. The eclectic squad made up of Germans, Fins, Australians, Kiwis and Italians are steered from the race workshop in Mattighofen by Technical Co-ordinator Dirk Gruebel. The jovial German has been a key part of KTM's set-up since the start of the millennium on both sides of the Atlantic except for a brief dalliance with BMW's doomed Enduro ambition. Read on to see how Gruebel walked his path to the top of the tree and some insights to KTM's success...

What is a quick, potted origins story for you with your technical career and working in motocross racing?

I was riding myself and had a good friend who was competing at a high level. I helped him out with the tools and at some point realised I was much better at that than riding! I worked five-six years with a Mercedes dealership and that was my technical education. It was a 9-5 job that covered everything; from routine maintenance to engine rebuilds to bodywork repair. I went to AMG in 2000 and it was more demanding and interesting. I was part of the small engine group and we'd build the units from scratch. We'd make the dyno runs, perform the analysis, split the engine again and measure everything. There were a lot of meetings with the engineers in the course of evaluation. Mercedes then took over the company and it became too big, too quickly. Our team was split and the knowledge was fragmented. It became boring just working on the dyno running programmes, even though it did help my knowledge when it came to mappings. Now with bikes running injection I had thorough understanding of fuel, air ratio, temperatures and mappings and the relation with the sensors. I moved on and tried to make a living in Canada but was kicked out after 9-11 because I didn't have my permit. It was around 2002 that I started to do some soul searching and came back to motocross and in July 2002 I started at KTM.

How did the KTM gig come up?

I went to races and talked to a few people. I mentioned if that they were looking for staff then I was interested. KTM was growing very fast at that point so I left my CV, ended up having a couple of calls then nothing happened. Suddenly I had a request to come down to Mattighofen right away and was sent directly to the U.S. to work with the overseas team. At that time it was Grant Langston, Broc Sellards and the start of the Jeremy McGrath story.

I did the very first tests with him and developed the bike until he dislocated his hip. We did the first three races over in Europe; Pesaro, Geneva and Arnhem until he pulled the plug. The whole set-up in the U.S. was new and quite basic at the beginning. It was not that professional yet and the idea was to get the 'big name' rider that would create momentum for the team and everyone around. I think the pace of the project was too quick, even in Austria because Jamie Dobb was developing new bikes in Grand Prix and that 2003 250 was not so easy to ride; both Dobb and Crockard [Gordon] complained. Jeremy had the same feeling. He liked the bike but had similar criticism, but it was too late for him to react as Supercross starts early January and then it is done. I think after those European races he realised he was not where he wanted to be...basically his time was over. He couldn't accept second or third which is what he would have managed in my opinion.

It must have been a big personal 'journey' with the American KTM adventure...

It was a challenge. When I went to Canada I was not the best English speaker but in that year I really picked it up...even though coming to grips with the technical terms for engineering was another thing. We made good progress in the U.S. and there was a decent atmosphere. 2003 was a tough year with Ryan Hughes and Langston battling for the Lites Outdoor title, there were some heavy fights inside the team!

Did you get a good feeling then for the intricate workings of a team and all the personalities involved?

I was over there a lot but I was pulling the technical strings from Austria. I wasn't really involved in the management side because there was a structure already there for that. It was a big team with four or five riders and you almost needed to be a psychologist to handle



not just the racers but also the mechanics because everyone has their own mentality, ego and culture. It is a mix and match. If you are in that 'middle ground' as a manager or technical leader then you have to be that 'base' for them. Everybody can have a bad day but you cannot show it if you are having one! I would say it was easier ten years ago than today because the riders were not so young then. Now I could almost be their father quite easily! You cannot be 'the parent' but still have to be there to guide them and keep things on track. The American side of it built up. We changed workshop twice and established a base. We started from scratch and with some good people. In 2004 Ben Townley was riding the pure prototype 250 in grands prix but that was not eligible over there. We had a pre-production 250 model that Josh Hansen rode on one coast and Ramsey on the other but we could only take second place in those championships. It would have been a great result to take a title in that first year because it was a big effort by everyone. The bike went into production in '06 so we had to make a big push to get

500 units into the country by June. It was hard to handle all the procedures.

You mentioned your background in cars. Did you experience a big difference in the rate of progress and evolution?

Actually here in racing it is moving fast. I think if you looked at the engine today at AMG then it is basically the same as what we had in 2000. There is a different cylinder head and small things like this but the changes are minimal. In comparison, since I have been at KTM, we have been through five engine generations and rapid progression with the four-strokes. I think technology is moving quicker here. There is a racing budget and it is a maximum of two or three seasons before you start work on the new cycle. It is more challenging and you are getting deeper into everything. Here you have direct feedback from the rider – or you have specific alternate set-ups for them to test – and it is much more detailed.



You ended up back in Europe and Grand Prix racing. How did that occur?

The team changed in Europe with high profile riders and Tortelli [Sebastien] and Pichon [Mickael] were hired. There was also the idea that each rider would have their own technician. I was moved to work with Tortelli and Matte [Falt] with Pichon. We had a new engine but it was a bit too early. We had to make some compromises but everyone was in high spirits after pre-season. The first GP went well and Sebastien won a heat but Pichon had a meltdown and wouldn't go out for the next race. We couldn't find him. To be one rider down after just one GP pretty much destroyed the atmosphere. Georges Jobe was team manager and he was quite radical. What worked for one rider didn't for another.

BMW then contacted me in '08. I was supposed to be heading back to the U.S. that year to head up the KTM team. I got on well with Kurt Nicoll who was running the American set-up at the time and Winnie Kerschhaggl – who was moved to direct motorsports at the company – said I should stay. I was involved in running customer service and kits and that wasn't so challenging for me. BMW keep ringing week after week and as more names were connected and I learnt how big the project was and I made a decision to go.

Looking back now the BMW Enduro team didn't work out. You were on the inside so what was your perspective?

They tried to achieve a lot with money; which we all know is not really possible with racing. You need to earn it. You cannot buy a title and that was the mindset in the first year. David [Knight] 'put it on the table' that they needed to work harder and make more changes on the bike and they didn't really take that on-board until after he had left. Juha [Salminen] was saying the same things and putting the same pressure and I think if both riders had

joined forces with their wishes they we could have achieved more at an earlier stage. The feedback came one-after-another and we lost six months in the middle of the season that was vital for development. We made some big steps and Juha started winning. I think he owned one day in Mexico and we finished 2009 second overall. I felt like we were getting there but a lot of work was still needed with the engine and BMW did not want to change the concept. We could only alter the engine to a certain point. We developed the bike as far as we were allowed and then it came to a standstill.

It seems unbelievable that somebody with the power, might and expertise of BMW could not make it work...

Yep and I think there was a lot of pride involved. The idea should have been abandoned because it didn't function.

Perhaps some parallels there with Ducati's recent plight in MotoGP...

Maybe. I think they [Ducati] went one step too far. They went straight to a carbon frame and in that fast-moving world there is hardly much time for testing at the sharpest point. Then they switched to aluminium with little experience. If you look at the work Honda have done with the same material, well, they were producing bikes in the 1970s with the same frames and it took ages and ages to learn it and get that knowledge. Even then if you think back to five years ago they made a new chassis and struggled with it. For Ducati coming off their steel background to carbon it was a big leap and it was not like there were many people in the paddock boasting much experience with that material. You have Formula One but that is a different world. They also changed management and riders and it seemed complicated.



So the door opened at KTM for you again...

We were told late summer 2010 that the Enduro project would be discontinued and at the same time they acquired Husqvarna. They built their whole race set-up and there was a focus on Rally and that wasn't my life or my world. I didn't sign a new contract for that direction. I made some calls and 2010 was not an easy time in the motocross paddock but I spoke to Pit [Beirer, KTM Motorsports Director] and a few others. One day I had the call from Pit and went for a meeting at his house. From the 1st of January I was back at KTM.

How was the KTM of 2011 different to the one you left?

Calmer. Before there was always a lot of pressure to achieve that MX1 title and it had been won in 2010 with Antonio. There was a really good atmosphere. They had proven they could do it with a bike that nobody else has. It was like a 'home-coming' because there were still many people I had worked with before. It wasn't like a lot had changed. Everybody was really motivated. I didn't know the De Carli team before and they were a bit worried about a technical guy coming into the operation but

when I met with Claudio he recognised me from the past and we had a good understanding. It was fine right from the start.

When De Coster and the U.S. side of KTM was set-up did the temptation to head back to America arise?

Not really. My mind had changed on all the travelling. Although KTM went through some management set-ups there they landed a real icon in Roger and his structure was strong; it was not like they needed any extra input. Pit wanted someone to direct the Grand Prix team and that was OK for me.

Red Bull KTM seems a bit weird because you all look very together as a team – socialising and hanging out – but there are little pockets within; the Italian faction, the Everts MX2 pocket and other people like yourself floating in the middle...

It is a balancing act. I cannot handle the MX1 team like I do the MX2. In MX2 I am the strong-hand besides Stefan and I make all the technical decisions. In MX1 or MXGP, we do it together and if we have any technical ideas then we discuss them. Claudio has his own



DIRK GRUEBEL: RED BULL KTM

group with Tony, who trusts him blindly. He is the man there. There are different mentalities.

Is the race department really the first line for development?

I'd say the main one. Every year we discover something out there [on the track] whether we are having trouble or not. Even if it is going well then we have riders' requests to accommodate, like wanting better starts. That was always Jeffrey's [Herlings] deal in 2013 because there were other guys out there with consistently better starts. This refers partly to the engine but also his technique and his body size and weight. We tried to do what we could on our side and at our recent test for next season we achieved quite a bit because we went in a different direction than we thought. It looks like it has worked out. So we are the direct link to them. Every Wednesday we also have a meeting with R&D here and everything comes on the table.

Can it go deep into the structure of the engine? It seems that one of KTM's advantages has always been the speed of turning around important technical modifications...

It is possible here. If the base or standard engine is not working out for our guys then we try to develop something new for them and what could be a future direction for OEM. Sometimes we try some stuff and it works out to be a good experiment for competition but for the Joe Bloggs out there is it no good. It is too specific to the racers. If we wanted to try a couple of different crank ratios then you are talking a few weeks but to make that happen for the production line then the whole forging mould needs to be changed. They have long-term runs. We react quickly because of the environment we are in and those elements are hand-made because they are factory parts but there is also more risk attached. For production a lot more time and tests are necessary for the standard bike to be bullet-proof. It is impossible for us to say 'next week we'll run that ratio' and then it goes into production straight after. That is possible for the race team because if we have a good feeling after ten hours then it is enough to race with. We split the cranks afterwards anyway.

D

FEATURE



If people look at KTM for motocross then they will see Cairoli unbeatable on a special bike, Herlings utterly dominant and De Dycker with a resurrected career on the 450. How can you explain this because it involves three different characters on three different motorcycles? From the technical side what are you guys doing right?

In the past we might have been a bit too wild and had prototype parts out on the track too early. We'd test on Tuesday, race on Saturday and fail on Sunday and we completely turned around that system. We develop stuff and when it seems to be in the right direction then we make many hours on the benches. Then we give it out to local guys at a decent level and if it performs well and is reliable then we provide to our racers in training. If it makes the grade in training then at one point we will decide to put it in the race bike. In the past that process might happen in one week or two and that was too fast. That is the technical side but for the whole team ethos and somebody like De Dycker being able to feel at home then that is down to a caring atmosphere and the philosophy of looking after everybody on the team, not just the champions like Tony and Jeffrey. We show the KTM factory riders that they can have the same treatment across the board. The bikes are equal. I think another of our strengths is what we offer racers for practice. Our training bikes are really close to the race bike. I would say 90% is the same and that makes a difference. There is never a shortage of material. Jeffrey trains up there in Holland in the sand a lot and everybody knows that can eat parts but if he needs two engines in a week then he gets them. You will never hear from any works KTM rider from the last four-five years that they could not train with decent material. The guys come to the Grand Prix and know exactly what they will get and the technical staff are right there ready to support.

What about KTM's influence outside of the factory team? People like Butron, Nicholls, Coldenhoff and Febvre making decent results...do you find yourself having to keep an eye on how the brand is performing and do you have any role?

The factory team is first and foremost but riders like Butron and Coldenhoff in 2013 get support from us. There is information transfer and that helps us also. In 2013 we offered more kit parts and they were based and developed on our race engine of the year before. You still need a good relationship with the teams running those parts and also feedback with reliability and so on. Those guys might still go to a private tuner but there is high quality material inside.

Considering it has won four titles in the last four years why aren't more people racing with the 350SX-F?

In the last two seasons Davide Guarneri and Kevin Strijbos ran the 350 and got good results then the 450SX-F came along and was a new bike and people like new stuff. For me Kevin always looked good on the 350 purely because of his build and style. Like De Dycker he also turned around his career. It was nicer to watch him in 2012 compared to 2013 because he could be more aggressive on the bike but he did have a good season in '13. To answer your question I don't really know why more people are not looking at Tony and thinking the 350 can work for them also at the highest level, especially those coming up from MX2. The 350 is high maintenance as well because it is like a 250. For a private team on a tight budget it might be easier to run the 450.

What about Husqvarna? How has it changed things?

Wow, quite a lot in the beginning. All of a sudden we had a 'company' in the company but with the same people and a million questions from all over the place. Teams started getting interested in possibly having a Husqvarna deal, what the bikes would be and how they would look. Now we have more people involved but it will still be a big development in 2014. The base is good and very related to KTM, as well all know, but it will take-off. The Grand Prix teams we have are very good. Jacky Martens has been there forever and Ice1 is quite new but they have experienced people there and did a good job in 2012 and '13. I'm looking forward to this next chapter.



450 CUBIC APPAREL

MADE WITH HIGH END MATERIALS AND CUTTING
EDGE DESIGN, THE 450 MX APPAREL IS THE MOST
FUNCTIONAL AND STYLISH GEAR AROUND.



450
SERIES

RACE INSPIRED
RIDER DRIVEN

ALSO FEATURING
350 PRO STRATUM HELMET
TYRANT GOGGLES

SCOTT

ROCZEN: THE EARLY SIGNS

By Adam Wheeler

You cannot get too worked up by Ken Roczen's victory at Anaheim even if it was a momentous achievement for a nineteen year old that has already arrived to a level of excellence and prestige in the motocross world – both sides of the Atlantic – that very few have reached.

The first round of seventeen can throw up a few wobbles and Supercross has proved to be a classic case of attrition as the series circles North America in nineteen rapid weeks.

Perhaps James Stewart would have won if he hadn't slid out of a rut in the whoops, Ryan Villopoto traditionally needs to find his groove and Ryan Dungey launched his typical consistent trail through the calendar on the right foot.

Seeing Ken Roczen ride the 450SX-F at the Monster Energy Cup in October the German was clearly at home on the bigger bike and this was before Aldon Baker's training regime strained every sinew. The former World Champion, four times MX2 MX of Nations winner and 250SX West Coast number one clearly has a very high degree of proficiency for the premier class but stringing together that speed and regularity across the states and weeks is another 'ball-park' in the ball-parks.

Even if Roczen has made a bold first step in AMA racing there is still a tough path to walk to eclipse perhaps the wave-parting in America created by Christophe Pourcel, a debut SX winner and double champion don't forget.

Still, let's reflect on '94's' Los Angeles milestone almost a year after his initial victory in the 2013 250SX title winning term and eighteen months after that triumph in the Las Vegas shootout.

“Stringing together that speed & consistency is another ball-park in the ball-parks...”

Roczen's impact at Anaheim last weekend reminded me of his Grand Prix debut in 2009 as a baby-faced fifteen year old. Thomas Ramsbacher, Team Manager of the Teka Suzuki team in the MX2 division, was adamant that Roczen should be talked about in the same manner as his established GP riders, and this was before the German's initial outing at round five in Portugal and his fifteenth birthday. His subsequent seventh position overall and fourth place in the second moto at Agueda was a major (and exciting) declaration that vindicated Ramsbacher's belief.



One week later he was fighting for the lead in Spain and then three rounds afterwards he won his home Grand Prix at Teutschenthal all before the age of being legally able to drive.

I can remember some American colleagues asking me what the fuss was all about in Roczen's debut GP year as most journalists queued up to sing his praises. After all, this was a teenager who was comprehensively beaten by Justin Barcia at Loretta Lynns the previous year (although coming back from injury then).

Roczen just seemed so adaptable, so natural and crested the obstacles and the diverse tracks found in GP racing without breaking stride. He was thin and wiry but this hardly stopped him. He showed-off on the bike and was clearly frustrated by some of the inhibiting nature of the old-school tracks but one of his favourite quotes to the press around this time – and something that unwittingly mocked the monotonous drone of his peers – was 'if you have a good eye there is always a place to pass'; remarkable for a adolescent with minimal GP racecraft experience.

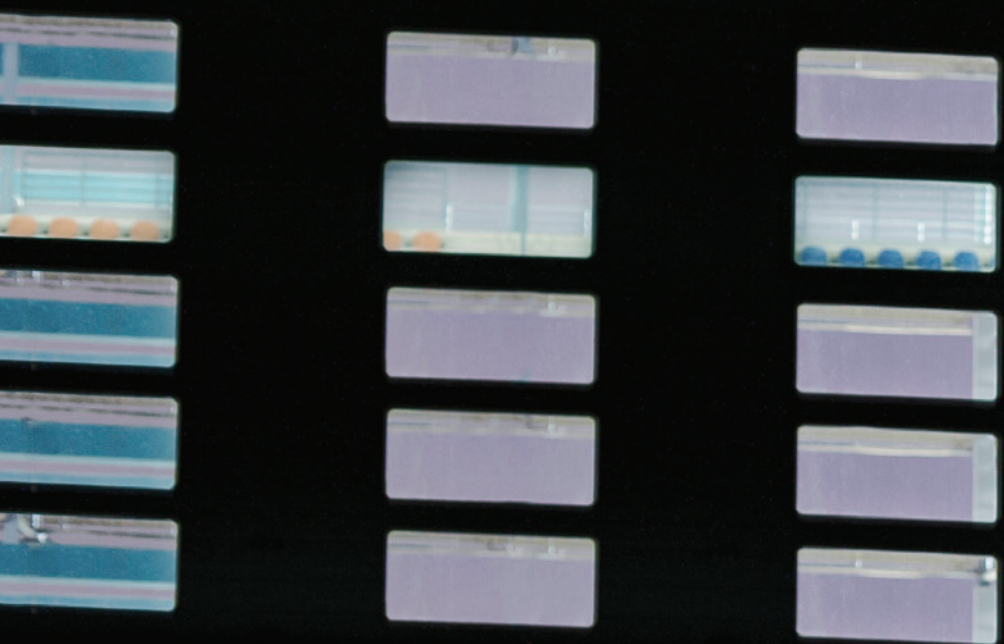
Ken knew he was good and had people telling him so. At sixteen he was a darling of Fox and Red Bull. His English was impeccable and

his nerves sturdy. He started to grow up in the paddock enjoying the nomadic life on the road, accepted the demanding training laps of the Lommel sand (he was one of the few to take a race in the soft stuff to Jeffrey Herlings) and slowly cut down on the McDonalds.

“Since his glittering debut in ‘09 it is a pleasure to see the progress Roczen has made...”

He was often blasé about interviews (something I see he hasn't improved on too much) but was frequently approachable. Maybe only the level of adoration Tony Cairoli receives in Italy matched the fervour for Roczen in Germany over the past four years. He almost had to hide away – Valentino Rossi style – in his last appearances at Teutschenthal.

It is a pleasure to see the progress Roczen has made in the stadiums and in a totally different racing sphere but for all those there at Portugal in 2009 it was not a huge stretch of the imagination to see a day like Anaheim on the horizon and perhaps a great deal more to come.



GARAGE PET

By Roland Brown, Photos by Zep Gori, Francesc Montero & Ula Serra

HONDA FIREBLADE SP



Honda's Fireblade SP is a hotted-up sports bike in the tradition of the Sport Production models. So in other words upgraded machines built in small numbers for racing homologation — from which those 'SP' initials are derived. For 2014, the standard 'Blade is updated with a mildly tuned 999cc engine, subtly revised frame and more aggressive riding position. The SP goes further, with blue-printed engine internals, Öhlins suspension, Brembo Monobloc front brake calipers, sticky Pirellis, single seat and more.

But the Fireblade has always been different, and that's as true of the SP as of the original CBR900RR that revolutionised the superbike scene with its unusual 893cc engine capacity and ultra-light chassis in 1992. Even this latest, most exclusive version of the Fireblade refuses to follow its super-sports opposition by incorporating high-tech electronics, apart from the option of ABS brakes. The SP is the most lavishly equipped and expensive Fireblade yet but in many respects it's fiercely traditional.

Are Honda missing a trick here? Some might think so, and point to the firm's struggles in World Superbike, where the Fireblade hasn't been truly competitive since 2007. Then again, Honda can point to Alex Lowes' BSB title last season, the Suzuka Eight-hour win by Leon Haslam and Co, and the Isle of Man TT domination of Messrs McGuinness and Dunlop. There's plenty of proof that the finely honed Fireblade still has plenty of pace.

And this one more than ever, even though much of its 16-valve engine dates back six years to the model's last major redesign. For 2014 the standard 'Blade gets a modified cylinder head with reshaped and polished inlet and exhaust ports, plus gas-flowed combustion chambers. The intake trumpets are reshaped with slash-cut tops, as developed in World Superbike.



The SP also gets those blueprinted internals. Basically each piston's maximum weight variation from the target 177g is one gram, rather than the normal three. The main benefit is reduced vibration. Maximum power is increased by 2bhp to 178bhp at 12,250rpm.

Most of the SP's differences are in its chassis, notably Honda's first ever use of Öhlins suspension. The chassis also incorporates new, stiffer triple clamps and an aluminium twin-spar frame that was revised around the swing-arm pivot to make it less rigid, for improved feel. This mod was also incorporated into the standard model. So was the revised riding position, which angles the clip-on bars slightly wider and lower, and moves the footrests back by 10mm.

HONDA FIREBLADE SP





“No traction control? Yes but Some riders prefer the traditional method and a chassis whose aim is to help the rider use brain and right wrist - not electronics - to go fast...”

HONDA FIREBLADE SP





Despite that, on its launch at the Losail MotoGP circuit the SP felt very much like the previous Fireblade — just a little bit tauter, racier and quicker. There was no noticeable power dip even if this 'Blade does counter its slightly improved torque output below 6000rpm by making slightly less between 7-9000rpm, before coming on stronger from 10,000rpm to the rev limit at 13,000rpm.

A couple of riders found the unchanged gear-box a touch notchy but I didn't have any problems with it, though it's disappointing that a bike of this quality and price — it costs roughly 25 per cent more than the standard 'Blade (£14,999 in the UK; £15,600 with C-ABS) — doesn't have a quick-shifter.

Handling was exceptional, notably from that Öhlins front end, whose solid, confidence-inspiring feel was remarkable even by the high standards of modern super-sports bikes. The rear TTX36 shock also gave a superbly well-controlled ride, after a few clicks of preload and compression damping had been added to the stock track settings.

Braking power from the specially developed Brembo Monoblocs was fierce, with the updated C-ABS system doing a good job. It now gives less front brake when the rear pedal is used, and none at all when it's used very gently. Pirelli's SuperCorsa SPs grip superbly although embarrassingly I proved they need warming up properly even in warm but windy Qatar by crashing on the first lap of my second session.





TEST

HONDA FIREBLADE SP





This most racy of Fireblades is certainly at home on a track, and it doesn't lose out too much in practicality. Its single seat allows the rear subframe to be lightened, saving 1kg and bringing wet weight to 199kg (210kg with ABS). As to whether the Fireblade loses out by not having a good traction control system, personally I'd say yes but you can make up your own mind about that. Some riders prefer the traditional method of development, aimed at creating high but not excessive horsepower with the emphasis on the way it's delivered, and a chassis whose aim is to help the rider use brain and right wrist, not electronics, to go fast.

The Fireblade has long been the leader of this group and the SP takes Honda's approach to a new level. It's definitely the ultimate Fireblade: fast, refined and sweet handling. Whether it's the ultimate Sport Production machine depends on what you expect from a cutting-edge superbike.

BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL...

By Matthew Roberts

Exactly thirteen years ago I spent the MotoGP off-season working at Dorna's main offices in Barcelona, desperately trying to generate content for what was still a fairly primitive version of their now highly successful website motogp.com.

Back then it was a case of cold-calling riders, trying two or three phone numbers in different countries because you didn't know where they might be and chasing up a trail of voicemail messages and missed calls until you finally got your man.

Garry McCoy, I remember, was usually a solid bet for a ten-minute chat from his home in Andorra whilst the likes of Johan Stigefelt and Jurgen Van Der Goorbergh were always a decent fall back as the clock ticked towards home time and Kenny Roberts Jr still wasn't picking up his Spanish or American mobiles.

A press release from Max Biaggi's personal press officer was like manna from heaven when the pressure was on and Roberto Rolfo still hadn't got back from the gym.

I remember once calling Mick Doohan, assuming he was in Australia when he was actually in the USA, where it was 2am - I didn't really know Mick at the time but it struck me what a nice

bloke he was when he politely asked me to call back in six hours time!

Like most things in motorsport a lot has changed in just over a decade but perhaps nothing more so than the way riders interact with the press and their fans through social media.

“Much has changed...but perhaps nothing more than how riders interact with fans”

Far from the winter hibernation that the riders used to favour back in the early years of the millennium, Facebook and Twitter are currently awash with the most famous names in motorcycle racing updating their status on a daily basis, providing insight into their training routines, nutritional programmes and social activity.

Stefan Bradl (@stefanbradl6) has been particularly prolific, tweeting pictures of himself riding motocross, supermoto and trials, likewise @AleixEspargaro, who barely seems to let a day pass without getting out on two wheels.

Twitter is an entertaining and enlightening way to get to know the riders better and its no sur-



prise to see Colin Edwards (@texastornado5) focusing mainly on family activities, snowboarding and ice skating with his wife and three children in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, whilst Nicky Hayden (@nickyhayden) is clearly very close to his siblings and their kids, spending much of his free time with them back home in Kentucky.

Unsurprisingly, Marc Marquez's winter so far seems to have consisted of back-to-back awards ceremonies whilst Jorge Lorenzo has escaped to Mexico to plot how he will wrestle the main crown back from his young compatriot in 2014.

“Rossi was a reluctant starter with social media but now even has his own YT channel”

Thanks to Twitter we also know that Alvaro Bautista has been training in Lanzarote and in the Spanish Pyrenees, as has Hector Barbera, who has also been visiting friends in London and Milan, whilst Yonny Hernandez has been back home in Colombia and Michael Laverty is spending the New Year in Morzine with his brother Eugene and the rest of the Laverty clan.

There was a time back in those dark early days of the internet that it was impossible to get hold

of Valentino Rossi for quick chat, even for the official MotoGP website, but now he regularly tweets his whereabouts, such as at the Milan soccer derby a couple of days before Christmas - information, I'm sure, that would have made the Italian taxman's job a whole lot easier if it had been more readily available a few years earlier. Valentino, a reluctant and late starter with social media, has now embraced it to the point that he even has his own YouTube channel, featuring some brilliant footage from the endurance dirt-track races he has been holding at his Tavullia ranch, featuring other Grand Prix riders like Mattia Pasini, Niccolò Antonelli, Roman Fenati and his little brother Luca Marini.

If you haven't seen it already, here's the link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YDzgMspBGw&feature=youtu.be>

However, keeping your whereabouts private is not the only flipside of being a prolific tweeter, as Nicky Hayden can probably vouch for. The riders' close friends and family often offer an interesting alternative insight into their off-season activities, such as Nicky's girlfriend Jackie (@jackiemmarin). After all, if it wasn't for Jackie we'd have no idea that she “just got owned by @NickyHayden at 'Just Dance 2014'”

So thank you, Jackie. And thank you Twitter.



FEATURE





THE MAN THE PLACE

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by JP Acevedo/RTF

The supercross season has now launched and a number of athletes will keep a fitness programme ticking over as the race fixtures gather pace.

While OTOR was at the Monster Energy Cup in Las Vegas last October we met John Louch; yet another South African on the scene with a high profile and lofty status as a physical trainer. Louch is one of the key figures on the west coast of the United States who will be supervising the form and conditioning of various riders in the AMA field; either through his role as a personal coach or as co-owner of the Rockwell Training Facility. The expansive gym is based a few miles from Murrieta in the heart of California and motocross 'country', and has become the place where a raft of sportsmen and motorcycle racers are drawn for their work away from the track.

We grabbed some of John's time to asked how he arrived, set up the RTF and some details on his work with MX and MotoGP stars...

On the importance of background...

I grew up racing motocross and BMX in South Africa and Greg Albertyn was a really good friend of mine. When he moved to America we hooked up again. Going to the races to see Greg I got to know the riders. I was a trainer and a fire fighter and at that time I became friends with Roger de Coster. Roger influenced Travis Pastana to hire me and that was in 2000. I got out of the fire fighter deal and have never looked back.

On how success led to creation of an idea...

Travis Pastrana's mum was keen for me to train him and that's how it started. We won that AMA championship and at the time I heard Grant [Langston] was coming out to the U.S. I didn't know him but I had been told a lot of about him and being South African I thought it would be a good link. He had just won the title in Europe and we hooked up and instantly became good friends. We won the championship and I started to collaborate with different guys like Hansen, Millsaps...then the gym idea came about. I wanted to create a facility where I wasn't just exclusive for just one or two riders. I wanted to branch out because I felt I had accumulated a lot of experience. I had worked with skateboarders, MotoGP riders and wanted a place where I could welcome and deal with all sorts of athletes and amateurs.

On the reasons for the Facility...

There are a lot of amateurs that want to work to get to the next level and there is nothing really out there for them. That's how the whole Rockwell Training Facility came about. We couldn't train our guys properly at LA Fitness. The stuff that we wanted to do could not be done at those places. I had been talking about opening a facility forever and finally the right people come together. Rockwell Watches approached me and offered to help set it up. Grant wanted to invest and become a partner.

It has become a huge success, bigger than I ever thought it would be. I remember that I travelled so much going to the races. I couldn't so 'no' to riders. I recall John Hopkins calling me saying 'I need you in Germany' and I was supposed to be going on vacation with my family at the time. So the facility was about planting feet and training people there. I actually really wanted to help the amateur kids and the facility was more for them, but the Pro riders were saying 'this is just what we need'. It is cool seeing people appreciate it. When you start something then you never really know how it will be received and what people will take out of it. The response has been awesome.

On the accumulation of experience...

I have been training professional riders since 2000 so there has been an incredible variety over that time. I have learned so much about what works and what does not for certain sports and certain types of people. You learn something new from every athlete and their particular sport. One day you could be training a motocrosser, then a wakeboarder and then a BMX-er. You work with these people or you see them using the facility in a way that you think 'that's cool' and you borrow those techniques to try with supercrossers or motocrossers. You end up schooling people in a different and effective way, doing stuff that nobody in that field has ever really tried before. I've tried various schemes over the years and everybody has their own ideas with weights and routines etc. I do activities with riders like battle ropes and Indo boards and things that are a bit creative and get their feedback. We are doing work in the gym now that I believe has helped out riders a lot with their corner speed and concentration. We focus a lot on balance and core strength and when you ride a motorcycle most of it is in your legs. We do a lot of different exercises that work all the muscles in your legs.



JOHNNY LOUCH/ RTF

Cudby





On the different characters...

Each personality is different. You get some riders that are very moody and others like Broc Tickle who is always the same: happy and in a good mood! Some are fun to work with and then there are others that I don't want to go near because they are so up-and-down. Some riders come to the facility at a time when nobody else is around because they don't want pictures taken of them or people watching. They are more private. Then there are other guys that don't mind like Malcolm Stewart or Justin Hill. There are some that don't like each

other and come in at different times. But then I see some riders become friends because they keep bumping into the other in the gym.

On setting an example...

I'm in the trenches man. I won't say 'go and do a mountain bike ride', I'll get out and suffer with them. I'm a hands-on guy, so I can't accept excuses!

On the variance between the off-road and on-road guys...

I think the athletes are pretty much the same.



PLAY

The MotoGP riders also get out on the moto-cross track. They have to be in shape for MotoGP simply because of the g-force they are handling every lap. They work hard and I don't think there is a huge difference with the motocross guys; they are doing similar stuff. Although there are a few of the top ones, like Valentino and Jorge, that are not into cycling. I'd like to get Jorge to try out some intense mountain bike and cycling! Both sports are so dangerous. In MotoGP those guys have to do a lot away from the bike with tests, press, and many different people they have to talk to. There is big money and big speed. It is definitely more relaxed in motocross and supercross. When I worked with Hopkins, man he was a hard worker and it started to pay off for him with Suzuki eventually. He was a character. We travelled the world together and there were ups and downs. When I first worked with him so many people told me I wouldn't last a week and it ended up being four years.

On some hints for success...

When I do things, I do them 100%. People can figure out when you are full of crap. It has been tough to get here with a lot of mileage but like anything in life if you chase something hard enough then it eventually comes together at some point. I have guys calling me saying 'how do you get in the industry?' and 'how do you get to train a Pro rider?' and I always say start with the amateur kids and maybe stick with one who has the potential to go Pro. Professional athletes won't just pick any trainer. They want someone who can bring something fresh and useful to their programme and also someone they can trust... that is very important as you will come to know everything about them. They need to feel that you have their back. I have always stuck with my riders and helped them through good times and bad.

On the future...

We want to open up some more facilities overseas. Things are moving so fast and the sky is the limit. I have companies approaching me with different products to use. Who knows? It would be cool to bigger but I want to take it slow so that it is done right.





BACKPAGE

Monster Energy Girls
By Simon Cudby





'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

Adam Wheeler Editor and FIM MXGP correspondent

Ray Archer Photographer

Steve Matthes AMA MX and SX correspondent

Simon Cudby Photographer

Matthew Roberts Television Presenter and MotoGP correspondent

Gavin Emmett TV commentator/Presenter and MotoGP correspondent

Núria Garcia Cover Design

Gabi Álvarez Web developer

PHOTO CREDITS

Ray Archer, Simon Cudby, HRC, JP Acevedo, RTF, Zep Gori,
Francesc Montero & Ula Serra

Cover shot: Ken Roczen by Simon Cudby

This publication took a lot of time and effort to put together so please respect it! Nothing in this publication can be reproduced in whole or part without the written permission of the editorial team. For more information please visit www.ontrackoffroad.com and click 'Contact us'.